

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

church or chapel of Santa Cristina. Here the same wonders were enacted as had been done at Siena : the sick were healed ; men of evil life were brought to repentance. " I saw her speak to certain sinners," wrote Giovanni Dominici, the famous Cardinal of Ragusa, then a young Dominican novice, to his mother, " and her words were so profound, so fiery and potent, that they straightway transformed these vessels of contumely into pure vessels of crystal, as we sing in the hymn of St. Mary Magdalene that our Lord Jesus did to her."¹ A new breath of spiritual life seemed given to that decaying city, whose days of political independence were drawing to a close.

There were, as usual, some that murmured, and others that professed themselves scandalized at Catherine's mode of life and at the reverence with which she was treated, especially at the way in which many of the men and women who approached her knelt and kissed her hands. Two learned men of the city, Maestro Giovanni Gutalebraccia, a physician, and Ser Pietro di Messer Albizzo, a lawyer of repute who was a leading spirit among the adherents of the Gambacorti, came to her, much as Fra Lazzarino and Maestro Gabriele had done in Siena, and attempted to bewilder her with theological problems. To all their questions she answered simply, that only one thing was necessary : to know that Christ, the true Son of God, had assumed human nature for our salvation, had suffered and died for our liberation ; and she spoke to them so sweetly of the love of Him that they were moved to tears. But the hostile comments on the reverence shown her increased, until Fra Raimondo (Fra Bartolommeo being also present) hinted that she should stop it, asking her if it did not move her mind to vainglory. ^{tl} I hardly notice what they do," she replied, ^{ts} and, through God's grace, it does not please me; I consider only the good affection that brings them to me, and thank the Divine Goodness that thus moves them, praying that He may perfect and fulfil those desires which He has inspired.

¹ This letter, written from Constance in 1416, is included in Biscioni, *Letters di Santi e Beati Ftorentint*, and there is a Latin version of it appended to the *Procesius*.